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EVALUATION

Report of the Administrator

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	PURPOSE	1	3
II.	INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS	2 - 5	3
III.	TRENDS AND METHODOLOGIES	6 - 13	4
	A. Linking evaluation and strategic planning	7	4
	B. Facilitating and testing modalities of decentralization	8 - 10	4
	C. Building capacity of programme countries in new evaluation techniques	11	5
	D. Review of policy, procedures and operational mechanisms used in programme support, project design and monitoring and evaluation	12	5
	E. Collaboration with other international agencies	13	6
IV.	1995 EVALUATIONS: ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES	14 - 18	6
	A. Strategic evaluations	15 - 16	6

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CONTENTS (continued)

	Paragraphs	Page
B. Evaluations of SPR-funded programmes	17	8
C. Evaluations undertaken by UNDP-administered funds and programmes	18	10
V. EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY	19 - 20	11
VI. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION	21	11
Annex. Major OESP evaluation activities: August 1994 to 31 December 1995		12

I. PURPOSE

1. The present report builds upon specific developments of the past three years: the feedback study in 1993, the analysis of compliance in 1994/95 and the linkage between evaluation and strategic planning in 1995. These activities have taken place within the UNDP conceptual framework for monitoring and evaluation. The report describes activities undertaken in 1995 by the Office for Evaluation and Strategic Planning (OESP) and by other organizational units of UNDP in the field of evaluation. The extensive work programme in evaluation presented to the Executive Board at its second regular session 1995 (DP/1996/18) has been fully implemented. The evaluations have continued to focus on performance dimensions of the UNDP programme, including sustainability, results-based management, and beneficiary participation.

II. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

2. Building upon the strategy developed in the document entitled "Rethinking evaluation for feedback, learning and strategy formulation" (see annex to the 1994 report of the Administrator on evaluation (DP/1995/18)), the 1995 extensive work programme for evaluation has been fully implemented.

3. One of the major goals of OESP is to establish a clearer linkage between evaluation and decision-making, thereby strengthening ownership of the function throughout the organization. This is turn will lead to an improvement in compliance rates. To this end, OESP is presently undertaking a thorough review of performance compliance that will establish a performance profile of all organizational units concerned. This process will emphasize the importance of maintaining compliance rates in evaluation through adherence to established procedure, an issue that has been discussed at the senior-management level.

4. At the project level, evaluations are decentralized and regional bureaux and country offices have used their own resources to carry out approximately 900 evaluations between 1990 and 1994. Over this period, the statistics show an average annual rate of decline of 15 per cent in the number of evaluations due largely to the adoption of the programme approach, which has resulted in fewer small projects, and to the decrease in programmable resources towards the end of the fifth cycle.

5. In 1994, a total of 123 evaluations were carried out by UNDP. Final figures for 1995 are not available at the time of writing; however, early indications show that 92 per cent of project evaluations have been concentrated in Africa and Asia. Of particular note in the Asia region are the evaluations of the following projects: establishment of a national forest resources information database in China; development and use of hybrid rice technology in India; and strengthening of the National Planning Commission Secretariat in Nepal. In Africa, the salient evaluations relate to regional projects such as the programme for strengthening management training institutions in sub-Saharan Africa; the West African Rice Development Association; and, more recently, the final evaluation of the regional project on National Long-Term Perspective Studies, which is currently under way.

III. TRENDS AND METHODOLOGIES

6. In line with the OESP 1995 action plan for evaluation, five major initiatives were given priority.

A. Linking evaluation and strategic planning

7. One of the core elements of organizational change in UNDP is to become a learning organization and to institute a system of more measurable results and greater accountability. The close relationship between evaluation and strategic planning/management is intended to create a dynamic in which UNDP learns from its experience and applies lessons learned to the task of repositioning itself as a more substantive operation. The location of these functions in OESP provides a better synergy between evaluation and policy development. In 1995, OESP developed a substantial portfolio of strategic evaluations and maintained its involvement in programme evaluation. The strategic evaluations are focusing on policy aspects of key topics such as national execution and co-financing modalities. They also address implementation issues. These evaluations are designed to help to clarify appropriate policy choices in critical areas and, equally importantly, they examine whether operational performance standards are being met. The results of these strategic evaluations now form part of the agenda of the Strategy and Management Committee, the leading decision-making body at the UNDP corporate level, of which OESP is the secretariat. In parallel, lessons from the evaluations are being widely and systematically disseminated through a new publication series entitled "Lessons Learned", of which two volumes are already available: "National execution: promise and challenges" and "Evaluation findings in 1994". The latter will appear annually and will present detailed annual reporting on the UNDP evaluation function. Six other publications on evaluation were also issued in 1995 (see annex). A major effort has also been made to complete an option analysis on how to take greater advantage of the data contained in the OESP evaluation database (CEDAB) and make it available to a broader public. It is anticipated that CEDAB, which is already one of the largest contributors to the database of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC), will be on line throughout UNDP in 1996.

B. Facilitating and testing modalities of decentralization

8. Nine country offices and one headquarters division have been identified as the first in a wave of centres of experimentation that will help the organization to test and refine innovations in quality service and programme assessment on the ground. The centres will provide feedback on their experience with new procedures for the increased delegation of programme and project approval authority; revised planning, programming and reporting schedules; and the improved techniques for monitoring, review and audit of programme operations.

9. The decentralization team of OESP has conducted over 50 interviews, presentations and discussions addressing information needs with headquarters units. In addition, country offices in Costa Rica, Egypt, Kuwait, Mali, Rwanda,

Thailand, and Viet Nam have been visited. The work of the team will contribute to the improvement of monitoring systems that are fundamental for the implementation of new evaluation dimensions.

10. The testing phase of the PIPA system (Programme Impact Performance Assessment) has been expanded to include some of the centres of experimentation. The system is designed to deal with impact evaluations through a systematic approach to the broader issue of results-orientation. It requires attaching specific activities to various phases of the project/programme for the purpose of improving both the prospects of achieving intended results as well as the measurement of those results. It starts with the planning/design phase of all programmes, follows up with results-monitoring during implementation and culminates in impact evaluations. A concept paper has been finalized and tested fully in Egypt and Viet Nam. PIPA has also been introduced in Costa Rica, Bolivia and several headquarters units.

C. Building capacity of programme countries in new evaluation techniques

11. This activity involves the development of methodologies and policies for monitoring and evaluation and the upgrading of current training modules used by country offices and partner Governments. To this end, UNDP has sponsored two subregional seminars in Ethiopia and Argentina, in which UNDP national staff, government counterparts and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have participated. A third one is scheduled to take place in Kuala Lumpur in March 1996. These seminars, which focus on new dimensions in monitoring and evaluation, are providing the direct operational inputs required for the scheduled revision of the current procedures and the issuance of new policies and procedures in 1996. Through these seminars, 90 people have been trained in new techniques. In addition, OESP has trained 100 Junior Professional Officers in participatory evaluation techniques.

D. Review of policy, procedures and operational mechanisms used in programme support, project design and monitoring and evaluation

12. The aim of this review is to improve the design with regard to impact measurement. Building on existing documents, OESP has used country programme evaluations to upgrade methodological guidelines for evaluation. Three country programme evaluations have been carried out: Sri Lanka in 1994; Honduras and Niger in 1995. The evaluation of the country programme for Morocco is scheduled for 1996. OESP has also contributed to the development of new approaches in UNDP for incorporating beneficiaries/stakeholders through participatory evaluations, with pilot activities undertaken by country offices in Malawi and Swaziland. A handbook on participatory evaluation is being prepared for publication in 1996.

E. Collaboration with other international agencies

13. The Inter Agency Working Group (IAWG) on evaluation, chaired by UNDP, met in November 1995. The Group is becoming more cohesive and effective in coordinating United Nations evaluation activities. Joint work programme has been established focusing in the three areas of: (a) rating systems, led by the World Bank; (b) building evaluation capacity in developing countries, led by UNDP; (c) institutional arrangements for evaluation within the United Nations, led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). A number of joint evaluations are also foreseen in 1996 and IAWG will monitor the implementation of the evaluation aspect of General Assembly resolution 50/120 on the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. OESP also participated as an observer in the meetings of the DAC/OECD sub-group on evaluation and was active in the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) panel on monitoring and evaluation. At the request of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy sub-group on harmonization, UNDP has taken the lead in the preparation of harmonized guidelines on evaluation. OESP prepared draft guidelines in consultation with the programme and evaluation personnel at the headquarters of each agency. The process should be finalized during the first half of 1996.

IV. 1995 EVALUATIONS: ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

14. A few examples of evaluations conducted in UNDP during 1995 are presented below. These evaluations are grouped into three categories: (a) strategic evaluations; (b) evaluations of Special Programme Resources (SPR)-funded programmes; and (c) evaluations undertaken by the trust funds administered by UNDP.

A. Strategic evaluations

15. These evaluations have been undertaken by OESP and deal with subjects of critical interest to the organization. The issues identified by these evaluations are now regularly being fed into the decision-making processes in order to be translated into policy decisions, thereby completing the loop of planning, learning and doing. The evaluations are:

(a) Evaluation of national execution. The evaluation of this modality was undertaken to address further the issues of capacity-building, self-reliance, accountability and the optimal use of United Nations system expertise. The evaluation highlights the very positive aspects of the modality in the following areas: (a) ownership of the programmes; (b) self-reliance; (c) capacity-building; (d) sustainability; (e) cost effectiveness. Two emerging problems remain to be resolved in order to consolidate the gains from the broad implementation of national execution since 1992. The first problem is the loss of conceptual clarity regarding the roles of government, UNDP, and specialized agencies, and a loss of clarity regarding the system of programme management. The other problem is that national execution has yet to discover an optimal way to involve the United Nations specialized agencies effectively while simultaneously respecting the new responsibilities of the participating

Governments. Of additional concern is the finding that the national execution modality is presently promoting the status quo with respect to gender issues. The evaluators offer three broad recommendations for addressing these problems and monitoring the overall national execution process: (a) UNDP should adopt a new conceptual framework for national execution; (b) UNDP and the United Nations specialized agencies should improve the mechanisms for engaging United Nations technical expertise; and (c) UNDP should continue to monitor and evaluate critical aspects of national execution.

The recommendations of the evaluation report will provide the basis for new guidelines to be included in the 1996 action plan of the Division for Operational Policies and Procedures (DOPP)/Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS).

(b) Evaluation of UNDP co-financing. The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of results of the cost-sharing modalities in programme countries. The evaluation covered the full range of co-financing modalities in the context of resource mobilization and examined the role of co-financing as part of country programming. The report of the evaluation, which is still preliminary, makes recommendations on the policy framework for co-financing and on the strategies, the management and operations of co-financing. Given the substantial share of co-financing in UNDP total programme funds, the final report is expected to generate considerable interest. It is also expected to provide lessons for those country offices that have not so far used the modality extensively;

(c) Resident coordinator function. This exercise started in 1994 with a desk review that identified some issues that required field validation. To avoid duplication with the triennial comprehensive policy review of the United Nations operational activities for development launched by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD), it was decided to limit the number of countries to be visited in this phase to three. The first review took place in Viet Nam in March 1995. The corresponding report made a useful contribution to an analysis of what works and what does not. The second study, carried out in Zimbabwe, identified a strategy for coordination. The third field visit, to El Salvador, examined the issue of coordination at the subregional level. It is intended that the consolidated report, currently under preparation, will summarize lessons learned;

(d) Assessment of the working relationship between UNDP and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). This study responded to a recommendation of the UNDP global meeting at Rye, which called for the strengthening and expansion of partnerships with other development institutions. The purpose of the assessment was to understand and learn from what was seen organizationally as a very dynamic relationship, in particular in the areas of effectiveness of the collaboration, benefits gained from it and factors contributing to the success of the relationship. In order to foster the continued growth of the relationship between UNDP and IDB and maximize the benefits of their collaboration to countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, the assessment presents a group of recommendations aimed at establishing a more systematic and institutionalized level of dialogue and working contacts between the two organizations. The Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

is now discussing with IDB a new framework for enhancing cooperation between the two organizations;

(e) Ex-post evaluation of UNDP assistance to the energy sector. This evaluation was initiated jointly by the Sustainable Energy and Environment Division (SEED)/Bureau for Programme and Policy Support (BPPS) and OESP. It reviewed a sample of recent energy sector projects financed by UNDP and made recommendations concerning future assistance in the energy field. It also responded to the request for an appraisal of the availability and accessibility of relevant information on the energy sector. The main findings are that UNDP energy sector assistance has been extensive but fragmented; its development has not been guided by any path-breaking approach or underpinning strategy. Given the importance of sustainable energy development, a more integrated strategic direction would seem to be warranted. The evaluation makes suggestions on the future scope and direction of UNDP energy sector assistance. A new energy initiative has been undertaken using the lessons learned from this evaluation.

16. Three additional independent strategic evaluations have been launched by OESP in the latter part of 1995 and will be completed in the first half of 1996:

(a) The evaluation of UNDP support to Asian transitional economies. The purpose of this four-country study is to capture and analyse the experience of transition economies, using UNDP support as the entry point for this enquiry. Aside from being of interest to each Government, it is hoped that the evaluation will yield instructive comparative lessons to be shared and discussed;

(b) The evaluation of the impact of regional, interregional and global programmes. The objective of this evaluation is to consolidate mid-term reviews and evaluations and draw lessons that will help in determining the strategic directions of these various programmes for the new programming cycles;

(c) The evaluation of public sector management and reform in the Arab region. The purpose of the evaluation is to obtain a better understanding of evolving priorities, constraints and opportunities in public sector management in the region.

B. Evaluations of SPR-funded programmes

17. These evaluations were conducted as a mid-term requirement for SPR-funded programmes. Initiated independently by the various SPR managers, the evaluations of the largest programmes usually involved support from OESP:

(a) Human Development Report (HDR). This evaluation covered the first five volumes of the HDR, the 1995 report being still in preparation at the time of the evaluation. The objective of the evaluation was to determine, inter alia, how far the HDR has contributed to the development dialogue. The evaluation found that, after only five years, the project has succeeded in making a significant contribution to the global development dialogue and has had a positive impact on development policy design in many countries, mainly through the publication of the annual HDR. However, some adjustments - both institutional and methodological - are called for as the project enters a new

phase. Some of these adjustments relate to the Report itself, others to the process by which it is developed, its dissemination and the organizational location of the Human Development Report Office within UNDP. The evaluation provided the basis for an SMC decision on these issues;

(b) Technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC). The evaluation process focused on issues of inter-agency relations in programming and the catalytic role of the activities undertaken. Above all, the evaluation of the TCDC programme was expected to examine the impact of the programme, with the ultimate objective of improving the delivery of technical cooperation and optimizing the use of the SPR. The evaluation found that there was some difficulty in accounting for TCDC elements in projects not specifically identified as TCDC projects; it also established that the programme had successfully tackled the issue of common understanding of the concept. However, the integration of TCDC into the mainstream operational programme needs to be handled by system-wide efforts which the TCDC Programme can only propose. The evaluation also made recommendations of a more specific nature regarding the integration of TCDC in the operational activities of UNDP, and within national development planning, as well as the strategic thrust of TCDC. An SMC review of a strategy for TCDC followed the evaluation;

(c) Environmental and natural resources management. The evaluation was intended to determine the extent to which the fifth cycle SPR projects have (i) assisted developing countries in integrating environmental considerations into their development plans and programmes and (ii) strengthened the capacity of Governments and populations in national and local environment efforts. The general observation of the evaluators was that the programme for environmental and natural resource management met the criteria for which it was established. Some general constraints were identified as follows: (i) the level of funding was too small to have an impact; (ii) there were weaknesses in the dissemination and transparency of information; (iii) the choice of programme areas and sectors of activity was made with little reference to countries and country offices; (iv) strong priority was not always given to the use of local consultants and building of in-house capacity; (v) there were delays in responding to country proposals. The report offered a series of recommendations to improve the management of the programme;

(d) Women in development. The preliminary report of this evaluation is currently being discussed by various parties within UNDP. The evaluation underscored the fact that the programme played a major role in the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, facilitating national dialogue on the status of women and NGO participation at the Conference. The main recommendations of the report are: (i) clearer programme guidelines are needed; (ii) there should be greater emphasis on gender in development rather than on women in development; (iii) communication should be improved between the Gender-in-Development programme and the regional bureaux; (iv) the integration of gender-in-development activity into country programmes through the SPR allocation; (v) country office interest and ownership of gender programmes should be encouraged.

C. Evaluations undertaken by UNDP-administered funds and programmes

18. The following evaluations were also undertaken:

(a) United Nations Volunteers (UNV). In 1995, UNV undertook a series of reviews and evaluations designed to draw lessons from the past and to guide the overall future directions of the organization. The cluster of evaluations carried out in 20 countries addressed the following: UNV experience with national UNV specialists; Special Voluntary Funds (SVF) projects; UNV role as an executing agent; decentralized programming; and UNV experience with humanitarian assistance, democratization and peace-building activities. In addition, in-depth evaluations of 12 indicative planning figure (IPF)/SVF projects were carried out. While comprehensive feedback from the evaluations is awaited, initial findings reinforce the appreciation of the unique contributions of UNV specialists and of UNV as an efficient and competent volunteer-fielding organization. They also highlight the importance for UNV to maintain strategic alliances with a broad range of partners sharing similar development priorities. The results of these evaluations are being fed into the UNV Strategy 2000;

(b) United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). UNCDF evaluated eight projects in 1995 in the sectors of water irrigation, water supply, agriculture, transport, and sanitation, with particular attention to improved assessments of socio-economic impact, decentralization, and a participatory approach. Key lessons with strategic implications have been identified through this process. Implementation arrangements with complex beneficiary-based institutions emphasized the need for very focused project objectives and for enhanced oversight, technical cooperation, and backstopping. Careful attention needs to be given to the structure of co-financed projects, including arrangements on responsibilities and reporting requirements. Evaluations also pinpointed the need for flexible implementation or exit strategies when (i) project objectives had been largely realized and continuation would produce diminishing returns; (ii) subsequent phases would hinder local self-reliance; (iii) local institutions had demonstrated ability to continue project activities themselves; (iv) implementation strategies no longer met UNCDF objectives; or (v) project design was flawed. UNCDF commitment to the monitoring and evaluation of socio-economic impact and its emphasis on the thematic policy goals of participation and decentralization were evident in most 1995 evaluations. UNCDF continued to upgrade its monitoring and evaluation standards and integrate them into project design, increasing its capacity to analyse its socio-economic impact on a programmatic level;

(c) Office to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNSO). One major evaluation undertaken in 1995 concerned the project "Ecological Monitoring Centre" in Senegal. It represented the joint Government/UNSO final evaluation of the project and was intended to provide the basis for consideration of a follow-up project for the consolidation of achievements. The findings were that the project had made substantive progress in institutionalizing the Centre as a market-oriented venture with public utility status. The evaluation recommended that more be done in the follow-up project to assist the Centre in defining its national mandate and developing strategic management in order to improve environmental decision-making in Senegal and to make the Centre self-financed.

It was further recommended that the new project assist the Centre in contributing to the Government's formulation of a national strategy for environmental information systems. The evaluation resulted in the mobilization of additional resources and the new project is currently under appraisal;

(d) United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). During the reporting period, the more significant evaluations include three in Latin America, two in Africa and one in Asia Pacific. Key findings from these evaluations provide some interesting insights into the kind of work undertaken by UNIFEM. For example, the Andean Food Technology Project in Latin America and the Grinding Mills Project in Mali reconfirmed the important role played by civil-society institutions in ensuring delivery of development assistance. In both instances, the intermediary organizations were able to reach large numbers of women more efficiently than UNIFEM would have been able to directly. The evaluations also pointed to the importance of building national capacity through the provision of training and information dissemination. Evidence from the evaluations of the Janakpur Women's Art Project in Nepal and the Technological Assistance to Rural Women's Groups in Senegal shows that women participants had made important gains as regards self-empowerment, material and attitudinal changes. However, they also revealed the tension between short-term development interventions and investing in long-term change.

UNIFEM has had several opportunities to work collaboratively on evaluation activities with other agencies, primarily to provide technical expertise. For instance, UNIFEM has been working with the UNFPA Gender and Population Unit, at its invitation, to develop the framework for a study to determine the extent to which gender has been mainstreamed into UNFPA programmes and projects. Since UNIFEM has already implemented two such studies on mainstreaming, the Fund's work has been most valuable in contributing to the articulation of the framework as well as the methodology and the indicators. UNIFEM experiences with mainstreaming, primarily through projects in Asia/Pacific, will be included in the sample for site visits to occur in 1996.

V. EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

19. Notwithstanding the evident need to give strategic planning due prominence in the OESP work programme, the pre-eminence of the evaluation function has been maintained. Procedures followed by OESP for the conduct of its strategic evaluations are those established by the United Nations and UNDP. The difference, as noted earlier, is that the findings of the strategic evaluations reach decision-makers more directly and will continue to receive wider policy attention through early publication.

20. Details of OESP work in evaluation are presented in the annex.

VI. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

21. The Executive Board may wish to:

Take note of the present report.

Annex

MAJOR OESP EVALUATION ACTIVITIES: AUGUST 1994 TO 31 DECEMBER 1995

Activities	Status
Country Programme Evaluations - Sri Lanka, Honduras, Niger	Completed
Evaluation NATCAP - Guinea	Completed
Rethinking Evaluation	Completed
Options analysis for the expansion of Central Evaluation Database (CEDAB)	Completed
Monographs on monitoring and evaluation - Jordan, Morocco, Paraguay and United Arab Emirates	Completed
Review of UNDP monograph series on monitoring and evaluation	Completed
Subregional training seminar on monitoring and evaluation - Ethiopia, Argentina	Completed
Training on monitoring and evaluation in headquarters (approximately 150 Junior Professional Officers)	Completed
Subregional training seminar on monitoring and evaluation - Malaysia	Preparations under way
Training on monitoring and evaluation - Brazil	Completed
Publications - three new series developed and launched	Completed
Evaluation of energy sector projects	Completed
Evaluation of UNDP-IDB relationship	Completed
Support to DANIDA-led evaluation on Rwanda - UNDP contribution	Completed
Three participatory evaluation workshops - Swaziland	Completed
JCGP harmonization	First phase completed. Second phase under way
Baseline studies on globalization - programme and process evaluations	Completed
Evaluation of national execution	Completed
Evaluation of cost-sharing modality	Completed
Resident coordinator function	Completed. Report being finalized
Programme Impact and Performance Assessment (PIPA): - Concept paper tested in Viet Nam and Egypt - Testing phase expanded to some Centres of Experimentation	 Completed. Preparations under way
Assessment of sustainability of UNDP projects	Preparations under way
Handbook on participatory evaluation	Preparations under way
Evaluation of SPR-funded programme for evaluation and training	Nearing completion

Activities	Status
Strategic evaluations - Support to Asian transitional economies - Impact of regional, interregional and global programmes - Public sector management and reform in Arab States	Preparations under way
Joint work with SIDA/CIDA on evaluation	Ongoing
Contribution to DAC Expert Group on Evaluation	Ongoing
Reports on proceedings of Inter-Agency Working Group (two reports)	Completed
Contributions to SPR evaluations on World Conference on Education For All, Human Development Report, HIV-AIDS, DOPP research project, TCDC, gender programme	Completed
Support to assessment of UNDP by four donors	Ongoing
Contribution to capacity-building task force	Ongoing
Formulation of programme-approach evaluation guidelines	Completed
Support to GEF/Capacity 21 guidelines for monitoring and evaluation activities	Completed
Participation in SPR evaluations of NATCAP and aid coordination	Completed
Support to TCDC evaluation and Special Plan of Economic Cooperation for Central America	Completed
Corporate Monitoring - Production of "Managing Change Update"; Monitoring implementation of corporate plan	Quarterly. Completed for April, July, October 1995 and January 1996